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A
S E R M O N

Preach'd in the
Parish-Church

O F
T I V E R T O N,

On WEDNESDAY Sept. 1. 1725.

At the OPENING of an
Anniversary Meeting

O F T H E
G E N T L E M E N Educated at
T I V E R T O N SCHOOL,

And under the Revd. Mr. RAYNER,
the present MASTER of it, before his
Removal from Barnstaple.

By SAMUEL NEWTE, M. A.
Rector of the Portion of Tidcomb, in
the Church of TIVERTON.

Publiſh'd at the Request of the MASTER
and STEWARDS.

EXON: Printed by ANDREW BRICE, for
WILLIAM SHUTT, Bookſeller, in Tiverton,
and ſold by the Bookſellers of Exeter.

MDCCLXXV.

Price 6 d.





To the Reverend

MR. *William Rayner*,

MASTER OF

Tiverton School,

AND TO

His much Honour'd Friends
and School-fellows,

Sir JOHN CHICHE-
STER, Bar'

JOHN WORTH, Esq;

THO. BOLITHO, Esq;

The Rev. Mr. THO.

WORTH, Canon-

Residentiary of St.

Peter's, Exon;

The Rev. Mr. THO.
BURREINGTON;

ROBERT INCLEDON,
Gent.

HENRY CRUWYS,
Gent.

HENRY SANDFORD
Gent.

Stewards of *Tiverton School* Feast
for the Year 1725.

THIS SERMON

Is humbly Dedicated

BY

Their most Obedient Servant,

Samuel Newte.





A

S E R M O N

Preach'd at *Tiverton*.

ECCLES. xii. 11.

*The Words of the Wise are as Goads,
and as Nails fastened by the Ma-
sters of Assemblies, which are gi-
ven from One Shepherd.*



HIS Book of *Ecclesiastes*, from whence my *Text* is taken, is generally supposed to have been written by *Solomon* in his Old Age, towards the Decline of his Life; and the Subject of it seems to be the Result of his longest Observation and Experience.

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HE had made it the Business of his Life, as he tells us in the Verse foregoing my *Text*, *to find out acceptable Words*: To discover such Truths as would be of the highest Use and Benefit to Mankind: And by what follows he seems to rejoice in the happy Accomplishment of his End and Purpose, and to be well pleas'd with the Reflection on the Success of his Endeavours, That he had really been a Means of Instructing the World in all such necessary Parts of Knowledge as might serve to influence and direct the Conduct of Men in every Station, Circumstance, and Capacity of Life, whether private or publick, civil or religious. For, says he, *that which was written was upright*; that is, proper and expedient to be known. *even Words of Truth*; Maxims built upon the eternal and immutable Reason of Things, and therefore of undoubted Certainty, and such as would deserve our most serious Consideration and Regard; adding, in the Words of my *Text*, the singular Advantages which he had observed such instructive *Lessons*, if rightly apply'd, were for the most part attended with: *The Words of the Wise are as Goats, &c.*

As by *Wisdom, Knowledge, Understanding,* and Expressions of the like Import, so frequently made use of by *Solomon* in his Book of *Proverbs* and this of *Ecclesiastes*, is, no doubt, principally to be understood that intellectual Accomplishment whereby the Mind of Man is directed to choose for its End and Object the most Noble and Perfect Good, and to pursue it by such Means as are most suitable and proper for the Attainment of it; which, in short, is nothing else but what we call *religious Wisdom*, and consists in the Prosecution of the ultimate and sublime *Happiness* of the Soul in Heaven, by a sincere Obedience and strict Conformity of our Thoughts, Words, and Actions to the Will and Commands of GOD: So *the Words of the Wise*, here mentioned, are, by a plain and easy Analogy, refer'd to the same *Subject*; and accordingly are commonly taken to imply all such Instruction, as directly and more immediately administers to our Improvement in the Knowledge and Practice of our Duty to GOD. And by the Two Metaphors of *Goads* and *Nails* we are given to understand after what manner such *Instructions* operate,

operate, and what Power and Influence they naturally have upon us.

U N D E R the former is described their quickening, animating, and inciting Virtue; by the latter the close Adherence they gain, and the deep and lasting Impression they are apt to make upon the whole Life and Conversation of those who have been train'd up under so Divine an *Institution*.

U N D E R this View of the *Text*, by the *Masters of Assemblies* are meant the *holy Prophets* and *Pastors* of the Church, whose Office and Duty it is to teach and preach that *Divine Law*, which in the next Words is said *to be given from one Shepherd*; i. e. which from Time to Time has been *revealed* from Heaven by God, the indulgent Pastor of his People, for their Edification and Comfort in all Ages of the *Church*.

T H O U G H this kind of *Instruction* be what the *Wise Man* here principally recommends; and it must be acknowledged by all to be the most useful and the most necessary that we can possibly receive; all other *Knowledge* whatsoever being but subservient
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to it; yet forasmuch as his Observations are often calculated for the Purposes of common Life, to regulate and direct our Conduct and Designs, whether publick or private, with greater Hopes and Probability of Success in a Civil Capacity; I may therefore not unjustly extend his Meaning to the more general Signification of the Word *WISDOM*, as it comprehends the *Knowledge* of any useful *Truth* whatsoever, and a Power of applying it to all those important Ends to which it has a proper and more particular Tendency.

AND accordingly by *the Words of the Wise*, as most suitable to the present *Occasion*, I shall understand those Methods of cultivating Human Reason, which the Experience of the World has found to be most conducive to the begetting in us this most desirable *Perfection*; more especially that *Institution*, which in all civiliz'd Nations has prevail'd, of the *Erudition of Youth* in Schools of Learning: Where, by the Application of the Master's Skill and Industry, every one's innate, peculiar *Genius* is discover'd, and drawn out into Life: Their Minds are for-

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med for all laudable Improvements, and the first Foundation is laid for those Noble and Great *Atchievements* which in the Progress of their Years come to render their Names Famous in their own and future Generations.

To this Sense of the *Phrase* before us the subsequent Parts of my Text have a very apt Correspondence; and those Rules and Lessons which by our *Preceptors* and *Tutors* are infus'd into us in our Tender Years, are with great Propriety and Elegance represented by the *Metaphors* here made use of, and with no less Truth and Reason ascribed to GOD, who is the Author of all our *Endowments*, of what Nature, Kind, or Degree soever.

THE Words, thus introduced and explained, suggest to our Consideration these Two Things:

I. THE great Advantages of an Ingenious and Liberal Education: *The Words of the Wise are as Goads, and Nails fastened by the Masters of Assemblies.*

II. FROM

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II. FROM whom they are derived :
which are given from One Shepherd.

THESE Two Points I shall endeavour to illustrate in my following Discourse; and conclude, in the *third Place*, with a proper Application of the Whole.

I. To shew the Advantages of a *Learned Education* is a Theme as copious as the Perfection and Happiness of Human Life: All the solid substantial Pleasure which a Man finds either in his own Breast or in the Things about him owe their Original and Rise to the Power of it, being the fruitful Parent both of private and publick Good.

BUT I shall confine myself to such Particulars only as are pointed out to us under the significant *Allusions* of the Text: And indeed what they in their respective Force and Import convey to our Minds, is sufficient to recommend the Greatness and Value of them.

THE *one* represents unto us the more than ordinary Share which an Ingenuous

and *Liberal Education* has in the Formation and first Production of all excellent Qualities in Man; the *other* exhibits to us the mighty Influence it has in compleating and finishing his Character. As a *Goad*, it excites and quickens the natural Dullness, and improves the lazy, impotent Efforts of weak, unassisted *Reason* into Vigour and Activity: And as *Nails fastened*, it penetrates to the very Bottom of the Soul, takes deep Root in it, and cleaves and adheres to the *entire Habit* with so firm a Tenacity, as never after to be seperated or torn from it, without the utmost Violence to *Nature*.

H A D Man continued in his original State of Innocence and Perfection, had he preserved un sullied the Brightness of that *Divine Image*, wherewith he came out of the Hands of his *Maker*; with his *Apprehension* quick and lively, his *Understanding* clear and distinct, his *Judgment* unerring, and his *Will* and *Affections* under the strict Regulation of his *Reason*; he might then have pursued and contemplated *Truth* in its native Purity and Simplicity; devoid of all the Errours and Perplexities wherein it is
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now involved, and by a kind of *Intuition*, rather than the tedious operose Methods of *Discourse*, have arrived to such a Degree of *Knowledge*, both speculative and practical, as might on the one hand serve to gratify and entertain the *Rational Faculties* with the fullest Satisfaction; and on the other have amply provided him with all those useful *Arts* and *Inventions*, which so much contribute to the external Conveniencies and Comforts of Life.

BUT that universal *Curse* which the Sin and Transgression of our First Parents derived upon the World, sheds its Influence on Man with a more peculiar *Malignity*: His whole Frame and Constitution, by the just Judgment of GOD, is more than an equal Sharer with the rest of the Creation in the dismal and deplorable Change. The *Earth* no longer yields her Fruits, to sustain his animal Life, without the painful Toil of the *Body*: *In the Sweat of thy Face shalt thou eat Bread*, says his angry GOD, *Gen. iii. 19.* And the *Soul* itself, whose purer Make and Composition might have been less affected by it, is as naturally languid and barren, and unable to exert

ert itself, unless supplied with *Strength*, by the continued Labour and Exercise of its *Powers*. And as the *one*, by means of the same fatal *Malediction*, without repeated Care and Cultivation, degenerates from its primary, more beneficial Productions, into *Thorns and Thistles*, and such-like unprofitable or noxious Weeds; so the *other*, when destitute of those advantageous Improvements wherewith a *good Education* enriches and adorns it, is no better than a rude and desolate *Wilderness*, overrun with infinite *Errours*, or the darkest and grossest *Ignorance*. Of which the present State of the Barbarous Part of the World is an undeniable Example; whom if we compare with the more civiliz'd Nations, the latter seem no less to exceed the former upon Account of their Rational Improvements, by *Education* and *Study*, than the Wild untaught *Savages*, by Nature only, without those Helps, may appear superiour to the very Beasts that perish, whom God hath put in Subjection under their Feet.

It is the Power therefore of *Education* alone that is able to recover and repair those sad Defects of Nature since the *Fall*; which

which by insinuating its active Virtues into the *Mind* of Man, at a Time when the Faculties of it are, as the Parts of his Body, soft and flexible, and consequently most susceptible of *Impression*; impregnates the latent *Seeds* of Knowledge at first *implanted* in it, giving them such a Measure of their Original Force and Energy, as may produce their several *Fruits* in due Perfection.

IT displays the various *Parts* and *Capacities* of Men, with which they are respectively endued, determining them to those Uses which by the Author of Nature are assign'd them, for the more exact Accomplishment of the wise Ends of his *Providence*.

THAT Spark of the *Celestial Fire* which lies as it were smother'd under the Ruins of depraved *Nature*, and is the Fountain and first Motive of all *Knowledge* within us, glows again afresh, when revived by the Application of an *Heat* so congenial to itself; and when once kindled, it ceases not to diffuse its *Warmth* thro' the whole Man, 'till it has fired him with an Ambition of
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excelling in all Great and Generous Undertakings.

THE first *Inclinations* we generally discover are those only which are begotten in us by Sense and Appetite; and if the Bent of them be not alter'd in Season, and directed to more rational Pursuits, we soon come to think that there is no greater Enjoyment, and consequently no more necessary and important Business of Life, than to improve the Gratification of our carnal Lusts and Desires: Our Thoughts are wholly taken up and imploy'd in refining upon sensual *Pleasures*, and sink so low at last as to aim at no higher Character than that of a more perfect *Brute*.

'TILL by the *Arts of Thinking and Reasoning* we are trained up to the Exercise of our Faculties, the *Understanding* is wholly insensible to all the Charms of *Truth*: Or if the Minds of Men, by a peculiar happy Disposition, have any faint Inclination to an Acquaintance with it, yet still their Enquiries after it are but Groping in the Dark for they know not what. So that finding nothing but Difficulty and Uncertainty

tainty in the Pursuit of Truth, they soon grow weary of their Researches, and either give themselves wholly up to Indolence and Inactivity, or divert their Endeavours to the common and more ordinary Affairs of Life, such as may serve to bring them in a necessary Subsistence only, and that by the Labour of the Hands rather than the Brain: *Whose Trust*, as the Author of the Book of *Ecclus.* describes them, *is in their Hands. They shall not be sought for in publick Council, nor sit high in the Congregation: They shall not sit on the Judge's Seat, nor understand the Sentence of Judgment: They cannot declare Justice and Judgment, and they shall not be found where Parables are spoken; but all their Desire is in the Work of their Craft.* *Ecclus.* xxxviii. 33, 34.

BUT by the Help of that *Light* which is held out unto us by such as have already trodden the unfrequented Path, we can trace out the Way that leads to the *Tree of Knowledge*; from which a clear and open Prospect displays itself: Where we may freely and fully contemplate those *Beauties*, the Possession and Enjoyment of which is at once the most distinguishing Excellency,

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and the greatest Happiness of *Human Nature*.

WHEN once Mens *Understandings* are enlightened, and their Desires after *Truth* excited and put in Motion, the Force wherewith it acts upon the Mind necessarily renders those Desires impatient; their *Pleasure* still keeps pace with their *Knowledge*, grows in Proportion to the Increase of it, and every Taste they have of its delicious *Relish* raises their Appetites for larger *Draughts*. The Experience of such ample and advantageous Returns engages Mens Curiosity, and sets it on Work, and is the strongest Encouragement that can possibly be to a continued Progress in their *Application and Industry*; thro' the Help of which it grows at length by easy Steps to full Maturity; to such a competent Degree of it at least as never fails to give them that just *Prebeminence* in the Eyes of the World, which by universal Consent is allowed the Character of a *Well-bred Gentleman and a Scholar*.

FOR besides the Influence which the Infusion of such *Habits* have upon the essential

sential Parts of the Soul, the *Understanding*, *Judgment*, &c. to give them their due Light and Force, and to regulate and direct 'em to their proper Offices and Employments; which is no mean inconsiderable Advantage of a *Learned Education*, and would, if it went no farther than the *Mind* itself, be of inestimable Value: Besides its Influence within, it is impossible so to restrain and confine its *Power*, but that it will exert and manifest itself in outward and sensible Effects.

IF *the Words of the Wise*, those instructive Lessons we have been taught, come once to gain such a Reception in our Breasts as to remain, and make any Impression there; they will not fail to digest their wholesome Virtue into our *Manners* and *Conversation*: All the Productions of a Mind thus inform'd and actuated will discover their *Original*, and the whole Offspring bear the fair and beautiful Image of their *Parent*.

HENCE proceeds that *Affability* and *Courtesy* of Behaviour, that *Agreeableness* of *Address*, which so much recommends and endears

dears the Conversation of some Men ; namely, from a Mind cultivated and adorned by *Education*, and the Rules of *polite Literature*. By this the native Ferity and Roughness of Mens Manners is subdued and polish'd, and from this the whole Train of those amiable *Virtues* derive their Being and their Lustre, by the mutual Exercise of which that strong Propension in us to *Society* is improved into one of the most valuable Blessings of Life.

As the Graces of the Mien and Demeanour, so likewise do those of the *Words* and *Discourse* bear a Proportion to the Politeness of our *Education*. That Elegancy of Taste and Judgment, which the Mind has contracted by a right Way of Thinking and Reasoning, will upon all Occasions discover itself in the *Language*; the Issues of our Thoughts will be of a similar Nature and Complexion with the Thoughts themselves, as necessarily as Effects resemble their Cause; the Gravity, just Composure, and Delicacy of these will, in all Probability, beget an equal Degree of Weight and Decorum in the other. *A Wise Man's Words*, as the Son of *Sirach* observes, are weighed

weighed in the Ballance; that is, are generally significant and material. And it is equally true of him whose Proficiency in Learning has gain'd him the Reputation and Character of a *Scholar*: When he speaks, he speaks well, and to the Purpose; there is something in his Discourse which attracts and commands our Attention and Regard, being always accompanied either with the Instruction or Pleasure of those that hear it. Impertinence and Folly, as well as Rudeness and Indecency of Speech, are the certain Indications of Want of *Sense* and *Good-Breeding*.

AND then in the last Place, if we carry on our Observations to the *Actions* and *Employments* of a Man *well educated*, we shall find them conducted by a *Spirit* worthy of himself; that disdains the low fordid Ends which engross the Time and Business of the Generality of the World as unworthy of his more elevated and superiour *Genius*; which aims at Higher Things, and urges him on to Nobler *Pursuits*, such as may answer the great and important Ends of his *Creation*, and distinguish him in the publick Service of *GOD* and *his Country*.

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So strong, in short, is the Impression and Efficacy wherewith the Mind of Man is affected, by being early prepossess'd with the *Principles of Knowledge*, that all Designs of more considerable Moment and Use, do owe their Birth and Accomplishment to it, and 'tis that which finishes and compleats the Character of the *Wise and Great Man*. Which finishes, I say; for tho' some Men may by the Strength of a sprightly natural *Genius* and their own *Experience*, do many brave and notable Exploits, yet there have been such Faults and Imperfections observable in their Behaviour and Manner of Life, which might have been corrected and amended by the *Knowledge of Letters*, as have sullied and defaced the Beauty of all their other Excellencies, and fine Endowments. Not unlike to a fat and luxuriant *Soil*, which tho' it produces the best and fairest of Fruits, yet without *Art and Management*, it brings forth likewise the rankest *Weeds*.

THUS much of the Force and Import of the former Part of the *Text*, as it relates to the Use and Benefit of a *Learned Education*.

II. THE next Thing observable in it is the Author and Original from whence its Advantages are derived to us.

THE Text says they *are given from One Shepherd*; that is, from GOD alone; whose tender Care and Providence in training up his People is frequently and aptly represented in the Scriptures by the Office and Duty of a *Shepherd* towards his *Flock*. For whatever Gifts and Abilities we are furnish'd with are entirely the Effects of GOD's Bounty, both as to the Gifts themselves, and the Use and Application of them to any of the Purposes of Life. *Every good and perfect Gift*, says St. James, *is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights*: That is, every Thing that does in any Way conduce to the Perfection and Happiness of Man's Nature is from *Heaven*, and is infused and begotten in us by GOD, the Fountain and Author of all Perfection; *Light* in the Language of the Scripture being commonly put to denote the greatest Excellencies and most valuable Blessings: More especially, and by a peculiar Aptitude of Expression, it is there used to signify that Force of Reason and Understanding

ding which is kindled in us, to discern a-right of Things; And this G O D, who is *Wisdom* itself, is in an eminent manner the *Author* of.

S O L O M O N observes that it is his peculiar Prerogative to bestow it: *God giveth Wisdom to the Wise, and Knowledge to them that know Understanding.* And his Father before him hath taught us, that *it is the Lord who teacheth Man Knowledge. This is the Light,* says St. John, *that enlighteneth every Man that cometh into the World:* The highest Improvements of Reason and Understanding are but Candles lighted at this Torch; the brightest *Genius* shines but with a borrowed Lustre, and is no other at best than a Ray and Emanation from the *Divine Wisdom.* The 8th Verse of the xxxii. Chapter of the Book of Job seems not unsuitable to our present Purpose, *There is, saith he, a Spirit in Man, and the Inspiration of the Almighty giveth Understanding.* By *Spirit* is here understood the Reasonable Soul, or those Powers of the Mind which are the Organs of Reason, and wherein it has its proper Seat and Exercise. As if he had said; *There is a Power of Reasoning*
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in Man, or a Spirit which is able to discourse of Things, being a Faculty implanted in him at his *Creation*; but the Improvement of this Faculty is the Work of God: The Disposition of it in general, and Determination of it to this or that particular Service and Use, *is of the Lord*, and 'tis he which inspires and furnishes it with all its *Knowledge*.

HE blesses the Instruments, and gives Force and Efficacy to the Means which are imploy'd in the *Conveyance*, and fits and prepares the Soul for the *Reception* of it. He is the *Master Workman* in the Divine Art of Creating and Building up the Man, that forms and fashions him to all Great and Worthy Actions: That in the Language of the *Text* sharpens the *Goads*, and *fastens the Nails*, which he has put into the Hands of the *Masters of Assemblies, our Preceptors and Tutors*; or in the plain and literal Sense of the Words without a Figure, 'tis to the Divine Illumination alone that both the Beginning and all the gradual Accesses of *Knowledge* to its Perfection in any kind are to be ascribed.

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HAVING thus as briefly as I could illustrated the Doctrine of the *Text*; I come now in the last Place to draw an Inference or two from the Whole, and so conclude.

THE most proper Application of what has been said will be, to point out those *Obligations*, which flow from a distinct Consideration of the Two Particulars already insisted upon; namely, what is incumbent upon us, both as under the immediate Influences of a *Liberal Education*, and the happy Experience of God Almighty's special Favour to us in it.

THE Duty arising from the First of these is *Industry*, or a constant and vigorous Exercise of those Abilities, which by the Methods of our *Education* we discover our selves to be endued with. If we put not forth our own Strength, and co-operate not with the Endeavours of those who lend us their Hand, we lose the Use and Benefit of their Help, and our *Knowledge* is strangled in the very Birth.

THIS *Industry* alone that preserves the Constitution of the *Soul* as well as the *Body*, and keeps

keeps its *Faculties* in their due Tone and Vigour. The steady Application of the Mind to Study renders it capable of Improvement, and patient of that Attention of Thought by which it is attained. It adds Force and Extent to its Capacities, and prepares them for Undertakings of the greater Difficulty and Honour.

BUT I need not enlarge upon this Head at present: All Exhortations to *Industry* being perfectly needless in an *Audience*, where the Advantages of an Ingenuous Education do, by the Help and Exercise of this *Virtue*, make so handsome a *Figure* in all Faculties and Professions.

I SHALL therefore confine the remaining Inferences to such as are more directly of a Religious Kind, and are the Result of a just Reflection on the Second Particular before-mentioned. And they are;

1. THANKFULNESS to God for the Blessings of our Education. And

2. A DUE Improvement of it to his Glory, the main-End and Design of every Dispensation of his Favour. THE

THE Duty of *Thankfulness* consists in an inward grateful Resentment of Benefits received, and such outward Expressions of it, as may best testify our Acknowledgments, and declare the Esteem we have for them. Both of these admit of great Improvement, in Proportion to the Nature and Circumstances of the Favour. The more considerable the Value of it, either in it self or Consequences, the deeper always will our Sense of it be, and the more visible and conspicuous the Manner of its affecting us.

ALL *Publick Blessings* do necessarily bespeak publick *Acknowledgements*; and it is but reasonable in the Nature of Things, that where *many* have been Sharers together in the same Advantages, they should unite and join in some common Testimony of their Gratitude,

THIS seems to have been the Sense of the World, in its Institution of *set Festivals, and Anniversary Commemorations of any great and publick Blessings*; the united Praises, and just Acclamations of Men upon such Occasions have been always look'd upon to be more *honourary*, and consequently

ly better pleasing to God, and attended with more happy and general Effects.

THOSE Circumstances of *Solemnity* which usually accompany them are apt more sensibly to affect the Heart both of our selves and others: The Transports they beget in such Cases universally discover themselves, by the Communication of which, we mutually raise each others *Affections*, and heighten our *Devotions*.

BUT besides the excellent Uses of a *publick Commemoration* of the *Divine Blessings*, with Relation to our Religious Addresses, and God's Acceptance of them; they are not less considerable in regard to *our selves*; especially in the *Case* before us:

THE Effects of a *good Education*, and GOD's Blessing upon it, so visibly displayed before our Eyes, must necessarily fill us with a Joy answerable to the happy Experience we have of it; which upon such *Occasions* naturally loves to spread and propagate itself: We are apt to think our own Satisfaction imperfect, 'till we have excited the same Degrees of Complacency in others.

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This diffuses an Air of Chearfulness and Alacrity thro' the whole *Festivity*: Our Mirth is not more improved by our *Feasting* than our *Feasting* by our Mirth; they both impart a mutual *Relish* to each other.

HERE likewise the interchangeable Endearments of former *Friendship and Acquaintance* are revived again, and receive fresh Supplies of Matter both for their Continuance and Use.

OPPORTUNITIES of this Kind demonstrate to our very Senses the true Value of this *Blessing*, which tends to raise in us a suitable Veneration and Respect for the Memory of our *Founders, Patrons, and Benefactors*, by whose Beneficence and Liberality it has been convey'd to us; and at the same Time proves no small Motive and Encouragement to us to follow their Examples, in promoting upon this and all other Occasions the *Interests of Learning, and the Professours of it*.

AND lastly, as a further Advantage of such *publick Appointments*; here our *common Master and Instructor* meets with some
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fenfible Returns of Pleasure in the vifible Succels of his Endeavours, for the many painful Exercifes of his Patience, on the Frowardnefs, the Petulancy, and Untractablenefs of our Youth; and by our Attendance upon, and Part we bear in the *Solemnity*, we exprefs the grateful Senfe we retain of it, in the moft honourable and pleafing manner.

2. A SECOND Instance of Duty collected from what has been faid is a due Improvement of this Bleffing to the *Honour and Glory of GOD*, the main End and Design of every Dispensation of his Favour.

THE inward Abilities of the *Mind*, fuch as *Wisdom, Knowledge, Understanding, &c.* being as much above all other Natural Gifts as the *Soul* is more excellent than the *Body*; a greater Share of thefe muft be Signs of God's particular Love, evident Tokens of his extraordinary Bounty to us; and do therefore call for more eminent Expreffions of *Duty and Affection* on our Parts: For as nothing binds a generous Nature more than Kindnefs, fo no Kindnefs can be
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greater than this, as which tends to promote the chiefest Happiness we are capable of. It must therefore argue the most base and selfish Nature under such repeated *Obligations* not to increase in Returns.

BUT not to insist upon this, how considerable soever and rational an Inducement it be to us to pay our Great Benefactor a suitable Acknowledgment, we are moreover obliged thereto upon a Principle of *Justice*, as well as *Ingenuity* and *Gratitude*.

FOR we must know God's Gifts are sown and implanted, not laid up and treasured in us: We are not as *Store-houses* and *Granaries*, barely to preserve what we are intrusted with; but we must look upon ourselves as *improveable Ground*, capable to bring forth *Fruit*, *some Thirty*, *some Sixty*, and *some an Hundred-fold*, according to the different Cultivation which the Great Husbandman shall bestow upon us.

GOD has placed us here in this World as his *Stewards*, put into our Hands some of his most precious Goods, to be laid out and employ'd in his Service, to his Honour

nour and Advantage; an Account of which, as by the Law of common Justice and Equity he may, so he will, call for, answerable to the Trust reposed in us, and the Means he has afforded us for the right Discharge of it.

OUR Lord does not in Tyranny demand more of us than he has given us Abilities to return; and he cannot in Justice expect less. All the *Faculties* and *Endowments* of our Souls, which our Creator has been pleas'd to enrich us with, were bestowed on us not barely for Ostentation and Ornament, but for Use and Action; and he that made none of them in vain, but all for excellent Ends and Purposes, will not be pleas'd that we should suffer any of them to rust by Negligence, or to putrify and corrupt by Abuse and wrong Application.

As the Great *Proprietor* of our *Talents* will not countenance Sloth and Unfruitfulness in those to whom he has vouchsafed them; much less will he bear the Affront of their being perverted to his Dishonour, the Profanation of his Holy Name, and the

Diservice of Religion. We may be assur'd, nothing can be more provoking to GOD, and nothing that he does with more Anger resent, or will punish with greater Severity.

IF the unprovable Servant, that hid his Lord's *Talent* in a Napkin, be consigned to outer Darknes, what may we think will be his Doem that imploy's it to vile and wicked *Purposes*?

LET us therefore seriously reflect upon the unspeakable Mercy of God, that has distinguish'd us from the rest of Mankind by so *many and eminent Gifts*; and consider to what Instances of *Duty* they naturally tend and direct themselves; and with a *Fidelity* and *Diligence* proportionable to their Measure, endeavour to *perform them*; that so, when our Lord comes to call for an Account of our *Stewardship*, we may be all ready to give it up with a well-grounded Assurance of its Acceptance, and receive the most inestimable *Reward* annex'd to it, of *entering into his Joy*: Which GOD of his infinite Mercy, &c.

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